

THE MODEL SOUL-WINNER

NO. 2423

A SERMON

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“There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.”

John 4:7

THIS was the beginning of that interesting conversation which not only blessed this woman, but has been a means of grace to many others ever since, for this chapter and the previous one must be looked upon as among the most soul-winning parts of God's Word. I suppose that every portion of Scripture has had its use in the experience of men and women, but these two chapters have very, very largely been blessed in the commencement of the divine life. Many have been led through the door of regeneration and the gateway of faith by the truth so plainly taught in them.

I shall not delay you with any preface, but shall take you at once to the subject mentioned in our text.

I. You have before you here, first, THE MODEL SOUL-WINNER.

Jesus said unto the woman of Samaria, “Give me to drink.” I speak to many here who are wise to win souls. I hope that I also address many more who, although they have not yet learned this wisdom, are anxious, if possible, to be used of God to bless their fellow creatures. Here, then, is a perfect model for you—study it and copy it.

First, observe that our Savior, as the model soul-winner, was *not reserved and distant*. “Jesus therefore being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well.” If He had not been wonderfully anxious to win a soul, He would have kept Himself to Himself—and if this woman had spoken to Him, He would have answered her shortly and have let her see that He did not desire any conversation with her. There is a way of being civil, but at the same time, of repressing anything like familiar conversation.

There are some persons who have great gifts of freezing—they can freeze you almost with a look. You never dare to speak to them again. In fact, you stand and wonder how you could ever have had the impertinence to address such exalted personages! They evidently live in a very distinct world from that in which your poor self resides—they could not sympathize with you—they are too good or too great, too clever or too capacious.

And if you do not complain of their conduct, yet you give them a wide berth, and keep clear of them in the future, for they are not at all the sort of people that attract you. They repel you by their coldness, they are not magnets, or if so, they exercise the very opposite influence from that of attraction.

Now, if any of you are in such a frame of mind as that, pray the Lord to bring you out of it. But do not attempt to do any good while you are in such a condition, for you might as well try to heat an oven with snowballs as to win souls for Christ with a distant, cold, dignified manner of speech. No, cast all that away, for nothing can render you so feeble, and so useless, as to cultivate anything like separateness from your fellows.

Come close to the sinner, draw near to him or to her—show that you are not keeping yourself to yourself, but that you regard the person you are addressing as a brother, as one who will find in you a sympathizer, who is touched with the feeling of his infirmities, seeing that you have suffered in many points like he has suffered, and are therefore on the same level, and desire to stand on the same platform with him, and to do him good.

There was nothing stiff and starched about the Savior. He was the very reverse of that and even children felt that they might go to Him freely. He was like a great harbor into which sailors run their ships in stress of weather—they feel as if it was made on purpose for them. The very look of Christ's face, the very glistening of His eyes, everything about Him made people feel that He did not live for Himself at all, but that He desired to bless others. There is the model soul-winner, therefore, for your imitation, in Jesus sitting on the well and condescending even to speak to a poor fallen woman.

In the next place, our Savior was *aggressive and prompt*. He did not wait for the woman to speak to Him, but He addressed her. "Give me to drink," said He. He did not wait until she had drawn the water from the well and was about to go—and so give her an excuse for saying, "I cannot be detained, I must get home with the water, and the sun is hot."

But no sooner has He seen her and her waterpot, than He begins a conversation with His request to her, "Give me to drink." The true soul-winner is like a man who goes out shooting—he is not half asleep so that when the game presents itself he waits till it has taken wing and has gone. He is on the alert—if a feather or a leaf moves, he has his gun all ready, and he is prepared for action at once.

The cunning fowler spreads his nets early in the morning ere the birds are awake, that when they first begin to move, they may be taken in his toils. And the Lord Jesus, with a loving wisdom, went about His work. He began with the woman at once—as soon as she came to the well where He was resting, He spoke to her and soon led the talk to the things which concerned the Christ and her own sin—and the way by which the Christ might lift her out of her sin and make her useful for the conversion of others.

I am afraid that there are some of you who cannot do that—you are so reserved, you say. How often have I told you that the soldier who was so "retiring" was shot? There was a battle going on and the man was so modest and retiring that he went to the rear of the fight—and they called him a coward and shot him dead.

I am not going to call you a coward, nor to shoot you. Still, I wish you would not get into the rear so much. While souls are perishing, it does not do to be reserved and retiring. A man who can swim, and would let his fellow man sink, would hardly be excused if he said, "I was so retiring that I could not push myself upon him. I never had the good man's card and I did not want to force myself upon him without an introduction, so I let him drown. I was very sorry, but still, I never was a pushing person."

Are you going to let men be damned? Are you going to let the masses of people in this city perish in their sins? If so, God have mercy upon you! The question will not be, "What will become of London in this case?" But the question will be, "What will become of you, who let men die in their sins without trying to rescue them?"

Carry the war into the enemy's country. Speak to people whom you do not know, whom you have never seen before as Jesus did. Speak to that woman whom you meet casually and providentially, as He did. Speak to her when the last thing she wants is that you should speak to her. Speak out at once and let yours be an aggressive Christianity that is prompt to seize every opportunity of doing good. What a model Soul-winner, then, you have here!

Next, the Savior was *bold, but He was also wise*. You cannot sufficiently admire the wisdom of our blessed Lord that He spoke to this woman while she was alone. He could not have said to her what He said, and she would never have said to Him what she said, if anybody else had been there. It was necessary that this interview be held in private.

But oh, you who are so zealous that you are imprudent, you who would gladly win souls, but attempt the task without that care which ought to come naturally to every sensible and prudent man, remember that although Christ spoke alone with this woman, it was in broad daylight, at twelve o'clock, by the well. If some people had been as prudent as the Savior was, they could have afforded to be as zealous as they have been. In the case of such a woman as this, I would have you remember the Savior's wisdom as well as His wondrous condescension.

With Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, He speaks by night, but with the harlot of Samaria He speaks by day. The soul-winner looks about him, he is wise in his plan of going to work. There are fish that will only bite in troubled waters. There are some that are not to be taken except at night and there are others that are only to be caught by daylight.

Fit yourself to the case of the person you are seeking to bless. I do not say be so prudent that you will run no risk, but I will say, be so prudent, especially in certain difficult cases, that you run no unnecessary risk. The Savior could not have selected a better time for talking to such a person—you will see at once that if even the disciples marveled that He spake with the woman—it was infinitely wise on His part that it was done at the well-side and done at noon-day.

O soul-winners, win souls any how! Be willing to risk your own reputation, if necessary, to win them. But it is not necessary, or not usually necessary, and it never should be done except when it is necessary. Your Savior sets you that wise example. Follow Him in this speaking to people singly. I do so much of public preaching that, perhaps, I lose a measure of adaptation for private conversation, yet have I sometimes done the most successful work I have ever done in private rather than in public.

Sitting at a table, I have marked a young man who was a stranger to me, and I have asked him to accompany me to the place where I was to preach. I did not know the way and I asked him to walk with me. A few words on the road won him for Christ and he has been ever since an earnest upholder of the Gospel and a very useful one. I do not know whether any were saved by the sermon, but I know that one was converted by the talk on the way there.

I know an evangelist who is useful in his public service, but he is also greatly useful to the families in the homes where he stays. Almost in every case, the minister's sons and daughters are converted before he leaves the house, or the servant or a visitor is won by his private conversation. I like that kind of work. Oh, that we all studied this art of speaking to persons one by one! So I say to you again, here is the model Soul-winner—copy His example.

Observe how the Savior begins with this woman—"Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink." When you are fishing, it is not always wise to throw your fly straight at the fish's mouth. Try him a little on one side, and then a little on the other side, and maybe, presently, you will get a bite. So the Savior does not begin by saying to her, "You are a sinful woman."

Oh, dear! none but an amateur in such a business would begin like that. Neither did He begin by saying, "Now, good mistress, I am the Messiah." Well, that was the truth, was it not? Yes, but that was not to come first—He began by saying, "Give me to drink." He must first attract her attention and influence her mind—then would come the closer work of probing her conscience and changing her heart.

It was only a very ordinary, commonplace request that Jesus made. "Give me to drink." It might have occurred to any one of you to say it, but not to use it as He did. Yet it was a word that was wisely chosen, for it fitted in with the woman's thoughts. She was thinking about drawing water and Jesus said to her, "Give me to drink." There could be no more suitable metaphor or mode of expression than that of water and drinking, if you are talking to a person who has come to draw water for herself or others to drink.

Besides that, it was an exceedingly pregnant expression, as full of meaning as an egg is full of meat. "Give me to drink." It contained much within itself. It gave the Savior as wide a field as He could wish for to talk to her about her spiritual thirst, and about that living water which He could put within her, which would abide in her, and be a well—not one to which she should come—but a well that she would carry about with her, and that would be always springing up within her unto everlasting life. So let us learn how to begin wisely with observations that are apparently commonplace, but such as will easily lead to higher things.

I think that the Savior as the model Soul-winner is also to be imitated in that *at the very beginning He broke down a barrier*. The Lord Jesus Christ was evidently dressed as a Jew and this woman came out of Samaria. Now, at once, there was a barrier between the two, for the Jews had no dealings with the

Samaritans. Our Lord broke through that caste by saying to her, “Give me to drink.” No other expression would do this so well, for to eat and to drink with persons was, after the Oriental fashion, to come into communion with them.

“Give me to drink,” therefore shook off from Him all Judaism which would separate Him from this Samaritan. If you are going to try to win people for Christ, always seek to break down everything that would separate. Are you a man of wealth? Well, I do not believe in converting souls by making your diamond rings glitter and flash when you are talking to workingmen.

Are you a scientific man? Now, that word of seventeen syllables that you have been so fond of—do not use it, but say something very plain and simple. Or do you happen to belong to any political party? Do not bring that question in—you will not win souls that way—you will be more likely to excite prejudice and opposition.

If I were talking to the French, I would devoutly wish I were a Frenchman. If I had to win a German, I should wish to know as much of the idiosyncrasies of that nation as I possibly could. I shall never be ashamed of being an Englishman, but if I could win more souls by being a Dutchman, or a Zulu, I would gladly have any kind of nationality that I might get at the hearts of men.

And our Lord Jesus acted just in that spirit when He said to the woman, “Give me to drink.” He sank the noble dignity of being a Jew—for, mark you, a Jew is the aristocrat of God—Jesus, even in His humanity, came of a race that is made up of the oldest and noblest of earthly nobility, but He dropped that dignity in order that He might talk to this Samaritan woman who was nothing better than a mongrel, for her race was made up of nobody knows what.

They pretended to be Jewish when there was anything to get by so doing—and to be Gentile whenever the Jews were in any kind of difficulties. But Jesus did not snub her, nor did He hint that she was in the least degree inferior to Himself. There is no winning souls in any other way than as the Savior won them. God teach us how to win them!

This must suffice for that first point, the model Soul-winner.

II. Now for just a few minutes I want to exhibit our divine Lord and Master in another light. Not this time as the model Soul-winner, but as THE MASTER OF CONDESCENSION.

He seems to me to be so thoughtful—this blessed Lord of ours, the Son of God, the Creator, the First-Begotten of God.

He takes His seat there on the well in weariness and thirst. Do you not see Him almost ready to faint? What condescension this was, that *He was so straitened that He had not even a draught of water*, or the means to get it. Maker of all springs. Bearer of the key of the rain, Lord of the ocean, and yet He needs water to drink? What a stoop is this, for your Lord and mine to come to this!

When He said, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head,” He had come very low, but now, even the water, which is such a common thing around us that it ripples from the hills, and streams through the vales, even that has fled from Him, and He says, “Give me to drink.” Bless your Lord, O you who love Him, kiss His feet, and wonder at His marvelous condescension!

I wonder at His condescension, next, that He not only came into such straitness, but that *He was so humble as to ask for a drink of water*. He that hears prayer Himself prays. He that listens to the cries of His redeemed and with the fullness of His majestic bounty opens His hand, and supplies the needs of every living thing, sits there, and says to the woman, “Give me to drink.” O Master, how You have straitened Yourself, how You have humbled Yourself, that You should be a beggar of one of Your own creatures, asking for a sip of water!

Admire that condescension still more when you think that He asked it of *her*, of her who had had five husbands, and he with whom she was living was not her husband. Yet Jesus says to her, “Give me to drink.” Some of you good women would not have touched her with a pair of tongs, would you? And some of you good men would have passed by her on the other side.

Jesus, however, was not only willing to give to her, but He was willing to receive from her. He would put Himself under obligation to a Samaritan sinner. So He says to her, who was not fit to come near Him to unloose the latchet of His shoes—John the Baptist said that He was not worthy to do that, but what was *she* worthy to do—yet Jesus says even to her, “Give me to drink.”

Then notice His condescension again, when she answers Him tartly with a reply that was perhaps civil in tone, but that was virtually a refusal, *He did not upbraid her*. He did not say to her, “Oh, you cruel woman!” No, not a syllable or look of reproof did He give her. He wanted not the water that was in the well—He meant to have her heart—and He did have it, and therefore He went on to speak to her.

Is not that a beautiful text, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not”? So the Savior will not give this woman a word of upbraiding—she shall be led to upbraid herself—but it shall be for her sin. She shall not be upbraided for her ungenerousness that the Savior has passed over.

This is the crown of Christ’s condescension, that He led her not to do what He asked her to do, but *He led her to confess her sin*. He said, “Give me to drink,” but apparently she did not let down that waterpot, neither did He put it to His lips, parched as they were. But He led her to her confession of sin, her faith in Him, her running to call the men—and all this gave Him meat to eat and water to drink that others knew not of.

He had won a soul and this had refreshed Him after His weariness. We do not hear of His being weary any more—He shook it all off at sight of that sinner saved. He was Himself again, for He had received what He would die to win. He had received a heart returning to the great Father, He had found a soul that trusted in Himself.

I wish that I knew how to preach better so that I might lead you to my Master, for I do want you to glorify Him. I have often tried to set Him before you as He hung upon the cross, and as He will come again in His glorious Second Advent. But just now I ask you to adore Him in His weariness as He sits upon the well. He is never lovelier than in His lowliness.

There is a grandeur about Him when He rides to battle on His white horse and summons the kites and eagles to devour the slain, but we start back from that terrible vision of majesty to the attractiveness of His love when He thus humbles Himself, and makes Himself of no reputation, and talks with a fallen woman. Seeing Him thus condescending, we love, and reverence, and admire, and adore Him. Let us do so now.

III. I shall have done when I have taken up my third point with considerable brevity, but with no little earnestness. It is this. You have seen the model Soul-winner and the Master of condescension, let us now notice THE MANNER OF THE WORKING OF GRACE, with the view that we may see it here this evening.

So you have come here, my friend. You have not come to be saved. Oh, no! That is very far from your mind. You came to see the place, you came to look at a building to which a crowd will come and listen to a minister of the Gospel. Yes, yes, but even that is no reason why you should not get a blessing, for *this woman only came to draw water*.

“There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water.” She had no desire to see Jesus, or to learn of Him. She was only looking for water. Saul went to seek his father’s asses and found a kingdom. So you may find what you never sought and you may be found of Him whom you never sought.

Listen. Open your ears. Mayhap your day of grace has come and the great silver bell is striking the hour of your salvation—I hope that it is so. It may be so, though you have no thought of it. You are not converted, you are not a Christian, but you would like to do good in the world, would you not? You desire to do some kindly action, something generous.

I have known that thought arise in a great many who yet did not know the Lord. Some people will not ask an unconverted person to give money. I would, for my Master said to a woman who was a great sinner, “Give me to drink.” It may be to the everlasting good of some of you to do something for the

church of God, to do something for the Christ of God. Before you know where you are, it may be that you will commit yourselves by some kindly act. I wish you would do so.

The way to win a person to yourself is not always to do him good, but to let him do you good. Jesus knew that, so He began by saying, "Give me to drink." So sometimes it may be wise—and I would try it now—to say to some of you, "You would like to do someone good, would you not? You would like to do some kindly action."

Well, notice, the Master is here tonight and He has come with much the same cry as He came to the Samaritan woman. *Jesus says to you, "Give me to drink."* "Oh!" say you, "What could I give Christ to drink? If He were here, I would gladly give Him a drink. I am sure that, if I were at my cottage door and He passed by on a dusty day, I would gladly turn the handle of the well, and bring up a bucket of water. Though I am not converted, I would do that."

Well, dear heart, you may do that. I want you to do it. It is your privilege to refresh the very heart of Christ. If you were not a sinner, you could not do it, but being a guilty sinner, you can do it. Your very guilt and sin give you the possibility of refreshing Him. "How?" you ask. Why, repent of your sin. Have done with it, quit it, turn from it.

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." It does not say that the angels rejoice, though I have no doubt that they do, but it is said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels." That is, the angels see the joy of Christ when a sinner repents. They spy it out and notice it. If you let fall a tear of repentance, if in your heart there is a sense of shame because of your sin, if in your soul there is the resolve to escape from it, you have refreshed Him.

Next, guilty as you are, *you can refresh Him by seeking salvation from Him.* Did He not say to the woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water"? And when she said to Jesus, "Sir, give me this water," that refreshed Him.

Ask this of Him now quietly in your soul. Oh, may God the Holy Ghost persuade you to do so! Cry to Him to save you. Say, "Lord Jesus, save me. I am but a girl and careless, but save me." "I am a young man, and thoughtless, but save me tonight." By so doing, you have given Him a drink, and He is refreshed already. The sweetest draught of all is when you perceive that He is the Christ, and that God has sent Him to save you—and you give yourself up to be saved by Him.

Trust Him now—may the good Spirit lead you now to trust Him! So will you refresh Him—this is the recompense for all His wounds, and even for His death, when sinful souls come and trust Him. I remember hearing of one who, while walking the fields, found a little bird fly into his bosom. He could not understand why the creature should come there, but when he looked up, there was a hawk which had pursued the bird, and the little thing had flown into the bosom of the man for shelter.

What think you? Did the man tear it in pieces? Nay, but he kept it safely till he had taken it away from the place where the hawk was—and then he gave it its liberty again. The Lord Jesus Christ will do just that with you if you trust Him. Sin pursues you—fly to His bosom, for there only are you safe.

I have heard of a great king who had pitched his royal pavilion and when he was about to move it, he found that a bird had come and built its nest there. He was such a king that, although the pavilion was of silk, he ordered his soldiers not to take it down until that bird's young ones were hatched and could fly.

I love the generosity of a prince who will act like that, but my Lord is a nobler and kinder Prince than all others. Oh, what a Prince He is for generosity! Poor bird, if you will dare to trust Him and make your nest in the pavilion where He dwells, you shall never be destroyed, nor your hope either, but you shall be safe forever!

Oh, that I knew how to bring you to Christ, dear hearers! This is a hot summer's night and you are weary, perhaps, of my talking, but I would not mind that if I could bring you to Jesus. Oh, that I might have fruit from this sermon also! This week, I believe I might say that I have met and heard of hundreds who, in past years, have been brought to the Savior by the printed sermons. They came to me, grasped my hand, and thanked me—and I praised God—but then I thought, "Yes, God did bless me, and He has

blessed the printed sermons, but I want present fruit, and to see sinners now close in with Christ and be eternally saved.”

Is all that I preach to you only a dream or a fiction? Then, fling it away from you and despise both it and me. But if it be true, and if I only tell you of a true salvation, and a true Savior, come and have it, come and trust Him now, for He casts out none who come to Him. May this be the deciding time with many of you, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 4:1-32

John Chapter 4. Verses 1-4. *When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee. And he must needs go through Samaria.*

When He was wanted in so many places, He did not care to stay among the Pharisees where He was not wanted. They would not receive His message, so He quitted the lordly professors, and went to look after a fallen woman. Christ’s estimates of usefulness are not always the same as ours. We think it a grand thing to be the means of converting a great man. Christ thinks it a worthy work to convert a great sinner.

5. *Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.*

You remember how the patriarch said to his favorite son, “Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.” This was “the parcel of ground” which was near to Sychar.

6. *Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well:*

What could the wearied Saviour do? Why, He could save a great sinner, and now that He is no more wearied, what can He not do? Brethren, when you go to preach or to teach, you like to feel fresh and vigorous, but do not think that this state is at all necessary. Your wearied Master won the woman at Samaria, so may you win souls, even in your weariness. Let us not make excuses for ourselves because we do not feel fit for our work.

God may bless us more when we feel weary than He does at any other time.

6. *And it was about the sixth hour.*

Twelve o’clock in the day, I suppose. Was that the time when the women usually came to draw water? No, but it was the time when a woman, who was shunned by other women, would be most likely to come; and the Saviour knew that. She had to take odd times to get to the well, for her neighbors did not care to be seen in the company of such a reprobate as she was, and she was probably just as anxious to avoid them.

7-8. *There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.)*

Or, “food.”

9. *Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.*

The woman seemed to say to the Saviour, “You Jews will not own us until you want something from us. Now that you happen to be thirsty, you do not mind asking for drink from me, but at other times, you will have no dealings with us.” This was a tart reply to our Lord’s request, but he did not answer the woman in the tone she had adopted.

When you are dealing with a soul, you must not lose your temper because of a sharp word, a hard saying, or even a blasphemous reply. Soul winners must be very tender and gentle. God make us so!

10. *Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*

Oh, that ignorance, that baneful ignorance! "If thou knewest thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee." Sometimes, my brethren, the key of a man's salvation may lie in your instructing him in the simplest matters of the Gospel, for, if he does but know, he will ask, and Christ will give.

Great issues may depend upon this, which seems but the turning of a straw. Therefore, go and tell men the way of salvation, for in the most of cases, ignorance, alas! bars the door. I mean not among those who have long heard the Gospel, but I mean the outsiders who do not know anything about it. Tell it to them and you may thereby open to them the kingdom of heaven.

11-14. *The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*

So you see, my dear hearer, if you get grace from Christ, you really possess it, and it is of that nature that it remains in you, and becomes itself a spring within you, "springing up into everlasting life." It is not that temporary, trumpery salvation which some preach, which saves you for a quarter of a year, and then lets you perish. It is everlasting salvation.

Once received, it does not pass away like that little dribbling shower that watered the pavement just now and is gone, but it shall be in you a well of water, springing up, a living and enduring principle. Or to use another Scriptural expression, "incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever." This salvation is worth your having, then, get it. It is worth your pining after, and praying for, and believing. Oh, that you might have it, even you! As soon as you trust the Lord Jesus Christ, it is yours, and yours forever.

15. *The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*

The woman had not even the faintest idea of the spiritual truth of which Christ had spoken to her. The fact is, conviction must come before conversion. No sinner is made alive till he is first killed. You cannot clothe him till he is naked. So now the Saviour began that conviction work in this woman and He did it very wisely. He did not at first charge her with criminality, but He led her to accuse herself.

16-17. *Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband.*

And as she said it, no doubt she tried to look as innocent as possible, but a guilty flush stole over her face despite her attempt to keep it back.

17. *Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband:*

Always give people credit for what is well said. If you want to win them, you must mind that you are not rough with them, but admit what you can of the truth in their utterance, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband."

18-19. *For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman said unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.*

It would have been better if she had perceived that she was a sinner. Perhaps she did perceive it, but scarcely liked yet to confess it openly, so she said, "I perceive that thou art a prophet." Now she has a religious difficulty, and what man or woman is there in the world, however far gone from morality, who has not some religious difficulties?

And the more immoral they become, the more difficulties they are pretty sure to have. I hate that style of preaching which is everlastingly pandering to difficulties which never would exist except in a dissolute generation like the present. We preach a plain Gospel, and when men's hearts are right, it is all plain to them. To him who desires to understand, difficulties soon cease to be a trouble. We had better

deal with men's hearts and lives than try to answer their quibbling questions. This was the woman's dilemma,—

20. *Our fathers worshipped in this mountain;*

That is, Mount Gerizim,—

20-23. *And ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what. We know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*

You see, brethren, all the difficulties that arise are but temporary. Put them away, and get to the great spiritual business that concerns us all, the seeking truly after God in spirit and in truth. If you really want to find God, you shall find him. He is already seeking you, and your very desire after Him is the proof that He has already had dealings with you by His Spirit. Therefore, come unto Him, and come at once, “for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

24-27. *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. And upon this came his disciples,—*

This gracious work of the Master had been done in private. Christ knew that such a person as this woman was not to be spoken to in the presence of His disciples, who were scarcely sympathetic enough for such service. But her heart is now won by the Messias, so, now you may come in, you disciples! Providence shut the door, and kept them waiting a while until this delicate piece of work was done.

27. *And marvelled that he talked with the woman:*

These men who had themselves been picked off the dunghill marvelled that Christ spoke to this woman! So have I known some, who were themselves grievous sinners once, yet they have become horribly conceited some years after conversion, and they have thought that other great sinners might not be saved as they were. God deliver from such abominable pride any soul that professes to be saved! Every believer should feel, “If the Lord has saved me, he can save anybody,” and that state of mind ought to be ours always.

27. *Yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?*

They had some sense left, sense enough to keep silence.

28. *The woman then left her waterpot,—*

Possessed only with one thought, going to tell others the glad news she herself had believed, she “left her waterpot,”—

28-29. *And went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*

They must have been surprised to hear her talking about good things. There was no more likely messenger to win men, or to strike them with curiosity, than such a woman as this.

30-32. *Then they went out of the city, and came unto him. In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.*

So has every man who lives to win souls for Christ. There is a larder which he enters where the very delicacies of God are brought before him, and his soul is sustained and his strength is renewed by the dainties that the Lord has provided for those who do His will. Brethren and sisters, may we often feed upon this heavenly meat! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—538, 499

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